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"OFF AG'IN! ON AG'IN! GONE AG'IN!" LAWSON WILL NOT SERVE

(By Benjamin Franklin Fly)

"Off ag'in! On ag'in! Gone ag'in!" but not "Flannigin," for this time it is the local board of costs review!

There is again a vacancy on the board!

After all that has been said, it now develops that former Assistant Manager Lawson is not to serve on the local board!

This information comes like a clap of thunder from a clear sky, and yet it is nevertheless true, for I get the information direct from Chairman Fleming, and he got it from Dr. Elwood Mead, chairman of the general board of review, now looked upon as the real head of the entire U. S. Reclamation Service!

It is more than likely that there are two reasons why Mr. Lawson is not to serve as a member of the local inquisitorial body—first, because he did not want to shoulder the burdens of the former manager, and second, because he was chosen by the Denver officials of the U. S. R. S. without consulting Dr. Mead, they evidently still laboring under the delusion that "whatever they say goes." It looks to me like they "woke up the wrong passenger."

At any rate, Mr. Lawson is not to serve, and the interesting and important question now is, who is to be the new man? First it was Manager Sellew. He was very unceremoniously bounced off the job, as well as out of the U. S. R. S. Then Mr. Baldwin was named; but a few days thereafter he was relieved of the task and assigned to other duties. It was from him, while he was here on a recent visit, that I got the information that the officials in Denver had informed him that Mr. Lawson was to take his place.

Chairman Fleming has been here since Sunday in company with Everett P. Teasdale, as the second member of the local board, impatiently awaiting the arrival of Mr. Lawson so they could get down to actual work on the Yuma project affairs. No later than yesterday morning a telegram came from Mr. Lawson saying that it would be ten days before he could reach here. Dr. Mead, as chairman of the general board of costs review, was immediately communicated with by telegraph by

Chairman Fleming and Mr. Teasdale, and, to their surprise, the word was flashed back that the third man had not yet been appointed, but that the appointment would be announced in a day or two.

So, there you are!

Funny, isn't it? Seems like somebody tried to "slip one over" on Chairman Mead, and that he wouldn't stand for it. Can you blame him? Well, I guess not!

It looks very much like "bureaucracy," so boldly inaugurated under the Ballinger-Newell regime, is just about on its last legs, if, indeed, it has not already been kicked squarely in the umbilicus. All of you will remember that a week or ten days ago the prediction was made in these columns that the rattling of old dry bones soon to be heard would remind you of a tin-can, "filled with rock-tied to a country dog's tail." That prediction still goes!

Secretary Lane knew exactly what he was doing when he ordered these public hearings in order to ascertain what has been going on throughout the Reclamation Service.

Thus far only two out of the 32 projects have been thoroughly investigated—Carlsbad and Phoenix, with Elephant Butte now holding full sway in El Paso. The findings of the board at Carlsbad were so stringent that they may well be called sensational. The management had been so rotten down there that the board recommended a refund to the water users of about one-third the money charged against the project. At Phoenix the investigation developed the fact that the "overhead charges" amounted to about one-third of the many millions that have been spent on the Salt River project! Just what the recommendations to Secretary Lane were, no one yet knows, for the findings were in the nature of a "sealed verdict." It is common report, however, that several millions of dollars will be saved to water users.

Down on the Rio Grande project the board is still wrestling with the Elephant Butte dam problems, the project manager, Mr. Lawson, through the Reclamation attorney apparently fighting every inch of the ground and daily sparring for time in order to try to offset the damaging testimony constantly being recorded at the public hearing.

And now comes the Yuma project!

What it promises is a plenty. Secretary Lane is aware of that fact; but he wants the truth, nevertheless, and so does Dr. Mead, the man nearest the throne. From all outward as well as inward appearances this is to be the

COST BOARD COMMITTEEMEN EXAMINE ANNUAL REPORTS

(By Benjamin Franklin Fly)

Chairman Fleming, of the local board of costs review, is permitting no grass to grow under his feet in his efforts to eventually arrive at a fair and impartial verdict as to the stability of the work done on the Yuma project, as well as to arrive at the proper cost of the work.

He reached Yuma late Sunday night. Bright and early Monday morning he and Mr. Teasdale, together with Mr. McConnell, of the local U. S. R. S., visited important parts of the work on the Bard unit. Yesterday morning was devoted almost exclusively to a visit with Acting Manager Priest in the latter's office at Reclamation headquarters.

Later in the day, Chairman Fleming, Mr. Teasdale and Mr. Priest made a trip to additional important points of the Bard unit and, naturally, he plied many questions to the acting manager, as to why this or that was done, and how much it cost, etc., all of which goes to show that the chairman of the local board is determined to familiarize himself with even the smallest details connected with the Yuma project.

Early this morning, Chairman Fleming took a notion he wanted to see the rock quarry from which much of that "700,000 cubic yards" of rock and

hum-dinger of them all! Dr. Mead may yet insist that Mr. Baldwin get back on the job and stay on it till the last cat is skinned. He was here long enough last week to learn a good deal, and, while I have no means of knowing it, yet it is almost a certainty that he examined the "book accounts" pretty thoroughly, for when I asked Mr. Priest if he had a copy ready for the Examiner, Mr. Baldwin smiled, and then winked the other eye.

A good portion of yesterday was spent by Chairman Fleming and Mr. Teasdale at Reclamation headquarters in company with Acting Manager Priest, suggesting to him what they needed in the line of maps, records,

limestone dust has been extracted. On this trip, Mr. Teasdale, who is familiar with the quarry, did not accompany the chairman. He watched the method of blasting the rock and loading the cars with much interest.

When I asked him at noon today what he thought of it he said it would not be proper for him to make comment, either favorable or otherwise, at this time, showing that he intends to maintain a position of "strict neutrality," from the very start.

At 1 o'clock this afternoon, Chairman Fleming and Mr. Teasdale were again slated to visit headquarters, where they were to join Mr. Priest, and the three make another inspection trip over the Bard unit. But they didn't go. It is certain that if they had gone they would have picked a different route from that taken yesterday for they got stuck in the sand for about an hour and probably would have been there yet if it had not been that all three of them worked like trojans to extricate themselves.

It can be seen that Chairman Fleming, like his fellow member, Teasdale, is "a real live wire," and the manner in which he has grasped the situation is certainly indicative of the fact that he knows what to do and how to do it.

Go to it, Mr. Chairman! More power to you!

What Yuma wants is an early and just settlement of this vexatious question; nor can it ever be settled until it is settled right. Keep up the good work, both you and Mr. Teasdale, regardless of who the third member may be. The people of the Yuma project are with you, and they have a right to expect much at your hands.

All this afternoon was spent by the two members of the board examining annual reports and trying to get all ready for the formal meeting of the board which certainly will not be deferred much longer.

etc., to facilitate them in their investigation. Armed with some of these maps, the two members of the board and Mr. Priest spent yesterday afternoon on a tour of inspection of the Bard unit.

At noon today I used the telephone and asked Mr. Priest if he knew who was to take Mr. Lawson's place on the board of costs review. He said:

"No, sir; I haven't the slightest idea."

So you see it's "off ag'in, on ag'in, gone ag'in!"

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